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UNION OR NOT?

BY

Dup

AN ORANGEMAN.

*Why do the Heathen so furiously rage together?
And why do the People imagine a vain thing?*

PSALM 2. i.

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UNION OR NOT?

TWENTY-ONE different pamphlets have already been printed on the subject of an Union; I have read them all without being satisfied, most of them without being convinced:—let this be my excuse for writing.

If ever a topic fell under public discussion which demanded cool and deliberate argument, which should be most carefully protected from the obtrusions of Frenzy and Folly, it is this great question of Union:—Frenzy has intruded;—perhaps on reading
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what I shall write, Folly may be supposed to put in her claim.—It is not with the extatic oaths of a bedlamite barrister, who dares to array his Creator as a party in political debate ; nor yet by the simple absurdity of him, who proves that a thing injurious to the majority is useful to all, that such a question should be investigated. Neither should the good or evil of the question depend upon the partial effects which an Union may be expected to produce in partial circumstances. It is not whether Dublin or Derry, Belfast or Cork, shall be injured or benefited—diminished or increased ; whether the Bar shall be profited, or the Clergy aggrandized ;—but whether the whole island, perhaps we should say the whole empire, will be likely to find it a measure of advantage,—that it becomes the wise politician to consider.

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It is Swift I believe, who remarks of his countrymen, that they " usually form an " opinion of every matter, long before they " know what the matter is in itself :"—In no instance has his sagacity been better evinced than in the discussion of this question. To say that an Union is bad, before we know its terms, is to say that no Union can be good. This is rather an hasty judgment :—for let us suppose in the way of argument, that an Union were proposed, by which the seat of Imperial Government, were to be transferred from London to Dublin, and by which this city were to become the Royal residence, the rendezvous of the British Parliament, &c. &c, would there be a man in society who could declare such an Union disadvantageous to Ireland ?

How many gradations then of Union are there between this of which we have spoken, (which would unquestionably be of incalculable

culable advantage) and a degrading subjection to Great Britain, which would strip us at once of all privilege and consequence? How many steps must there be from this undeniable good, to that which would be flagrantly ruinous? How many of the intermediate plans in this descent, must be advantageous, how many of a mixed nature, before we arrive at absolute injury? This I conceive to be a sufficient argument against any intemperate condemnation of the project, until we know the principles upon which it is to be founded.

May it be hoped that this unfortunate country is at length arrived at that waking hour, when the visions of theory are no longer alluring; that our sad experience has taught us the lamentable folly of speculation, and the wicked absurdity of political dreamers, who, to realize an idle fancy decked with gay conceits and gaudy metaphors, would

would plunge, as they have before done, this island into blood, for the horrible experiment of observing her agonies.

If that time be come, if the mere question of Union be not on the face of it an outrage against reason, and if a plain man may state a few plain arguments, then may I hope to find a few readers, even though I venture so late into the discussion.

Men are fond of talking of their own motives ; mine are few and simple. By the title-page I avow myself an *Orangeman* ; those who know the honorable principles of that association, will not suspect me of hostility to my King, my Country, or any Class of my Fellow-subjects ; but while I avow my goodwill to all, my affection to Protestants, and amongst Protestants to Orangemen in particular, is ardent and sincere.

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The enemies of our association have of late most anxiously sought to engage us in this controversy ; their anxiety was enough to render us suspicious ; but when it appeared that this anxiety was directed towards the project of arraying us against a supposed measure of the King's Government, it proved their malevolence.

A *late* measure, (I need not mention it publicly,) has rendered this malevolence abortive ; and so fairly has the subject been left to discussion, that amongst the dearest friends, we have witnessed the most decided diversity of opinion on this political subject, without the slightest tincture of unkindness,

Not to delay too long from the main question, let me be merely understood to speak the sentiments of an individual, however I may chuse to designate myself by a
general

general description, as one of a society of which it is my pride to be a member.

The Lawyers have called this Union an innovation, and a large majority of them have declared against it *at this time*;—by this we are to suppose that they admit it may be a good thing at another time.

This admission seems to grant every thing as to the principle of an Union, for the objection of time is one which always occurs; if the country be disturbed, it is alleged to be mischievous to urge any momentous measure,—if it is quiet, it is equally dangerous to disturb its tranquility; so that in fact, the objection of time is like the procrastinating disposition of a man who brings himself to think that every thing may be better done to-morrow than to-day, when it is by indolence, and an aversion to trouble that he is really actuated.

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But this objection will not weigh with the wise and honest pastor, who finds the diseased prodigal on his bed of sickness, worn out with frantic debauchery,—he will then tell him, that the season of pain is the season of reformation,—that the afflictions with which he has been visited should excite him to an alteration of his conduct,—and that in the calamities ensuing from his errors, he should see the necessity of avoiding those errors in future: such would be the doctrine of the pious teacher, and thus might he snatch from destruction the recovered penitent.

Has not Ireland had her season of calamity? Have not her calamities arisen within herself—shall we add—from her own misconduct? And is not this the moment when an alteration of conduct should be determined upon?

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Shall we look to Wexford, to Ross, Kildare, and the long catalogue of promiscuous carnage, to specify our calamities,—to the streets of Dublin black with mournings, for fathers, husbands, children, and friends, the victims of the most bloody rebellion that ever disgraced human nature?—No, every man feels in his own circle, something to deplore; the icy hand of Horror has been laid upon us all, and we still shudder at the dreadful recollection.

Whence have these calamities arisen? On one side you will be told, from the refusal of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform—from divisions upon abstract terms!!—Look a little farther, and you will perceive the very original agitators of these questions, confessing and avowing that their object was a Separation from England.—And why? Because, either they desired a connection with France, or an opportunity of putting

putting into effect, the new principles of that country. To realise these theories, forty thousand lives have been lost, our fairest districts have become uninhabitable deserts, and the country has received a shock which for many years it will not recover.

All this from the indulgence of political speculation, from a desire to new mould and fashion our Parliament, and turn our Constitution into every strange shape into which a few fanciful men wished to have it tortured.

To effect this design, its projectors, about seven years ago, began to consider whom they might employ as the under labourers of their project; they pitched upon the Irish Papists; and no small pains were taken to persuade that class of people, whose prejudices against Protestants, carefully nursed by their priests, had most obstinately

nately held out against all the increasing kindness of forty years ; that they were grievously oppressed by the Protestants, and that they (the projectors) were their only friends.

The good-natured Protestants, upon their request, granted them some privileges, of which their former misconduct had deprived them ; this emboldened the Papists,—and instead of requests, demands were made.

Let not the reader be alarmed, the history of Ireland for that period, is too complex and tedious to be detailed by me ; it is only necessary to observe, that from this beginning came all our misfortunes ; that the politics of Ireland for that period, have been of every motley colour and complexion : our Parliament refusing with indignation, and admitting with servility, the increasing demands of Popery,—enacting strong laws, approving

approving weak measures, applauding a Protestant, and courting a Popish Lord Lieutenant—in short,

“ Every thing by fits, and nothing long.”

And this, while one regular, steady, and consistent Administration has directed the helm of Great Britain, till she has attained a situation, which makes her the dread and envy of all the world.

The Constitution of Ireland is the same as that of Great Britain, one estate of Parliament is the same; where then are we to look for this diversity of conduct, but in some error in the administration of the two other estates of the Legislature?

That error is supposed to exist in their being distinct from, and not connected with the two similar estates in Great Britain. It is truly said, that as long as the King of both countries

countries resides in Great Britain, his advisers for the government of both kingdoms must be the same persons: the Constitution supposes the King to be advised by his Ministers, and it is impossible for us to conceive that his real advisers, immediately near his person, shall not have more weight with him, than his nominal advisers, who live in Ireland, and probably never have an audience above once in a twelvemonth.

It is also pretty well known, that the King's Ministers are usually nominated by the prevailing party in the British Parliament; it was so in the case of the late Lord Chatham and the present Mr. Fox, who were both appointed Ministers, though personally disliked by their Sovereign. Thus then nothing is plainer, (without any imputation of corruption or intrigue) than that the King, under the present system, is advised by the servants of a Parliament exclusively British.

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This Minister is then supposed to act for the advantage of his own exclusive country, he advises the appointment of such Lord Lieutenant, as shall be most useful for his purposes, and by that Lord Lieutenant, the affairs of Ireland are conducted,—by the Servant of the Servant of the British Parliament. Let us not impute ill motives to any men ; but let us look at the Irish Parliament for the last twenty years, and we shall find, that though Lord Lieutenants have varied, Parliament has never varied in its approbation of every one of them.

Suppose it were otherwise, what would be the consequence, the British and Irish Parliaments disagree ;—where is their Umpire ? the Crown cannot interfere, the Crown is indeed bound to consult the good of the empire ; but I know not any power, with which it is invested to decide the disputes of independent Legislatures.

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In the year 1782, our gallant Volunteers enforced the claim of our Legislature to independence, by their services to the empire as much as by their remonstrances in arms ; but are we to resort always to a military decision of our concerns with our fellow-subjects ? must we wage our battle upon every point of political controversy ?

Two men, the nearest and best friends, sons of the same parents, will not always perfectly agree in sentiment ;—how then can two Legislatures, composed of many men, be expected always to coincide ? Indeed the obedience of our Legislature has been accounted for, but in a way so odious, that it should not be our wish to continue its consistency at so dear a price.

But say the democrats, all this argument applies to Separation as well as to Union, if our present state be bad, let us renounce

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the connection altogether, rather than, &c. then follows usually a good deal of rant about independence and imperial dignity, which I look upon to be pretty nearly as good argument, as the ravings of a maniac for his straw coronet and wooden sceptre.

To answer the main objection, that the argument goes to a Separation, let us turn to the confession of one of the most sagacious traitors who ever dreamed of that project:—he confesses that for many years this country must be crippled by England; that is to say, that if we separated from Great Britain in an hostile way, we could not send fishing boat out of our harbours to catch a herring for our food: such an admission, qualified indeed by Mr. Emmet, with the probable ruin of Great Britain at the same time, affords us no great comfort; society in affliction may serve to alleviate misery, but who would plunge into ruin for the
diabolical

diabolical pleasure of seeing another suffer in company?

But look at the map of Europe, see our northern, eastern, and southern coast geographically surrounded by Great Britain; compare the relative magnitude of the islands; examine then their relative strength, and see whether they are not naturally designed for connection; whether separation, and the possible consequence of hostility, would not subject and destroy at least the smaller, if in the fulfilment of Mr. Emmet's malignant hope, it did not plunge both into one common ruin.

These are external arguments against separation; how many internal motives does our situation offer, for the nearest possible connexion!—I say our, for now I consider the question as an Orangeman—a loyal Irish Protestant.

Six hundred years have now gone by, since the first intimate connexion grew between England and Ireland. For the first three hundred years, the ancestors of many of us sustained a kind of colonial usurpation against the Irish natives. Arts, cultivation, and industry were introduced by the English; the settled property of land, and the dwelling together in towns, perhaps as much from necessity as choice, all these circumstances distinguished them from the Irish.

It is now too late to question the title of our forefathers, we may therefore admit that the Irish reasonably considered them as usurpers; add to this the rude and indolent habits of the natives, the unsettled tenure of property, which was subject to daily partition, and their roving mode of life, and we shall not be surprised at their animosity against the English:—the *Cashnawaga* is not at this day the friend of the American settler.

The

The Reformation in some degree changed the direction of this animosity, but did not abate its fury; the ignorance of the lower Irish retained them under the dominion of their priests, the English on the contrary became, generally speaking, Protestants,—and although some of the English descendants continued Papists, and a few of the Irish became Protestants, yet the distinction of Irish and English resolved itself gradually into that of Papist and Protestant; while the rancour of the former, whetted anew by superstition and bigotry, raged as violently as before.

Hence did it happen, that the same hostile disposition towards England, which in Edward the Second's reign, urged them to call upon Edward Bruce to be their King, invited successively, the King of Spain, the Pope, James the Second, and the French Directory, to rend asunder the connection between the two islands; separation from England, and
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not a dislike of foreign connection, was the motive of all these wars, the spring of all the massacres which have stained this country, from the bridge of Portadown to the strands of Wexford.

In the same proportion as they have sought this separation, have they proved their hatred of their Protestant fellow-subjects. A pregnant instance of that hatred, saved this country last summer: the northern Dissenters, whom speculating demagogues had talked into rebellion, and wheedled into an alliance with the Papists, when they found that the old persecuting spirit of their new associates burst forth instantly, on their acquisition of power,—when they heard of the cruel massacres of Wexford and Enniscorthy, where rebellion for a short time was triumphant, they became affrighted at their own misconduct, they awoke from their dreams of Reform and Separation, and each man, shocked
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at the atrocities of his allies, or fearing for himself, the insurgents of Ulster listened to the voice of Truth and Reason, and quietly returned to their looms and their senses.

The cant of liberality had been employed to rouse these men into arms, considerations of personal safety induced them to return to peace.

Setting aside then all declamation, which is only a comment upon the cant of the day, let us sincerely ask ourselves as Protestants, could it be possible for us to exist in this island separate from Great Britain? is the ferocious spirit of intolerant Popery so tamed, or so likely to become tame, as to suffer our existence upon any terms, when Popery shall be predominant? and assuredly, separate from Great Britain, the Protestants of Ireland would at least be outnumbered two to one, by their implacable enemies.

This

This then is my argument : geographically, a separation ought not to be ; politically, it cannot be without ruin to Ireland at least ; and practically, for the Protestant interest I hope it may never be. So that the arguments drawn from our present situation, apply to an Union, and not to that which ought not or cannot take place,—a Separation.

Having looked at our present situation in theory, let us see what it is in practice.

The nature of a free Government always requires party in the state. British parties, as they are immediately in the seat of Empire, must busy themselves about imperial concerns ; all this is proper, and serves to check the Minister ; but the misery of it is, that we have in this country, minor branches of the same parties, and not having imperial concerns to meddle with, the whole force of

them, discouraging and disarming the Protestant Yeomanry who have saved Ireland, affronting the first men in the land for acquitting a Protestant Yeoman, accused by a perjured rebel; and at the same time sending an avowed traitor, Mr. Sampson, into exile—exile! to Lisbon,—and another, (Mr. Garret Byrne) who has laid waste the whole county of Wicklow, burned the Protestant village of Hacketstown to the ground, and massacred every Protestant, man, woman, and child whom he found in the country, to reside at Stowe, in Buckinghamshire, the Paradise of England, the retreat of the patriot Cobham. Will any one say that these things would have happened, were there one Irish Legislator to stand up at Westminster, and tell these things to the people of England. It has been said, and idly said, that the people of England are indifferent about the Protestant interest; it is not so; the terrible convulsions of 1780, prove that their apprehensions

ensions on that ground are even too acute ; and surely - the Imperial Parliament would not tamely suffer the discouragement of that interest in Ireland, it would not leave those who had shed their blood, and lost their dearest friends, their properties and their homes, in defence of the connection with Great Britain, to sit down in comfortless poverty, to compare their lot with that of rebels, and to be forced to acknowledge that treason had the advantage.

It will be said that our own Legislature will be equally alive to the misfortunes of the Loyalists. Alas, I fear not ; in the very same House of Commons, which, with certainly no great degree of enthusiasm, granted a scanty pittance to save the Loyalists from famine, we have heard a proposal gravely made and seriously attended to, even during the rage and fury of rebellion, for rebuilding the houses of Rebels, which had been destroyed

destroyed in the contest excited by their own restless malignity.

It is indecent as well as unkind, to speak harshly of any number of men; but Legislators are but men, and their conduct is to be accounted for by the history of the last ten years. Who can be sure that Lord Fitzwilliam may not soon return, with full powers for his friends; the Protestants are already faithful, no discouragement can pervert them, they cannot, if they would, be traitors; kindness may attach the rebel, he may be won from his treasons, and if a little indulgence in his present irregularities, may secure the friendship of one who may hereafter be your master, every wise man will wink at his follies. Such may be the reasoning of an Irish Senator, in Dublin, such could not be his motive at Westminster.

I find

I find I have got deeper into this discussion than I intended ; but if, from what I have said, that which I firmly believe is proved, that it is the interest of the Protestants to have an Union, in preference to the present system, my labour is not thrown away.

Looking on the Protestants as the nation, as they are the Legislative Body, and considering their advantage from an Union as certain, let us examine one or two objections.

The first and most formidable certainly is, that by an Union the number of Absentees would be encreased ; but this I think, will not happen. We have very few absentees at present, who have seats in the Irish House of Commons, and those few represent boroughs ; and the reason is obvious : to carry an election for a county or great town, a man *must* be a resident, he must be a man well known, he must have property in the district,

district, and he must be always active to secure his election, or he will be turned out by some more active resident:—it is understood that, of the hundred members who are intended to form a part of the Imperial Legislature, none will represent boroughs; so that none will be returned but persons whom necessity will make residents, except during the sessions of Parliament,—and during that time, they are now as much absentees in Dublin from the places they represent, as they would be at Westminster. Almost the same might be said of the portion of Peers returned to Parliament:—the electing Peers will, at least the majority of them, reside at home, and their Representatives will probably find it their interest to cultivate their electors, in the same way as the Commoners.

It is said that Dublin will be injured:—I should suppose not, and I am disinterested in the supposition, for all the property I have
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or hope to have, is in houses in this city. It appears to me that Dublin will suffer no loss, except that of hearing Parliamentary debates, and being agitated by perpetual factions: Edinburgh, with fewer advantages, has absolutely doubled in extent, and in elegance encreased thirty fold from the Union;—and though it is argued, in opposition to this, that other cities of Europe have encreased in the same proportion in that time, yet the fact is, that not even London has, in the same time, made proportionate advances to improvement: Dublin, as a sea-port, nearly in the centre of Ireland, with all the advantages of inland navigation and maritime intercourse, must ever enjoy a great portion of the commerce of Ireland; as the point most convenient to Great Britain, Dublin must be always a port of considerable passage between the countries; and as the Seat of internal Government, the Courts of Justice,

Justice, &c. &c. must always have a beneficial intercourse with the rest of Ireland.

Nothing could be more obvious than that the Bar would oppose the measure; like the silver-smiths of Ephesus, they would naturally cry out—"for by this craft they live,"—but in the same proportion that they declare against the measure, inasmuch must it be of advantage, for excluding from the Legislature, men who are accustomed to speak and argue, without feeling any conviction upon the subject, and acting only from the sordid consideration of their hire, is surely one step towards the purity of Parliament.

For instance,—the Evening Post reports, that one Counsellor Plunket spoke violently at the Bar Meeting against an Union.—I am not acquainted with the young man, but as it seems to me to be a case in point, I will

will make free with his name: he is, I hear, a promising young Barrister, who had made some progress in his profession, until he was recommended to the electors of the borough Charlemont, by the Earl of C——, and by them chosen to sit in Parliament; now, in *downright* gratitude, he will do exactly as the Earl of C—— directs him, and being a Lawyer, he will readily bring his mind to think as his patron does, so that in fact, he is but the noble Earl's proxy in the House of Commons;—would it not be better for this country, to have an unlearned country gentleman in his place, who would have an opinion of his own.

It is also said, that the thirty-two Barristers who supported the Union, were the assistant Barristers of the thirty-two counties; now this seems to be an argument of their being the only disinterested parties

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present, for by Law the Assistant Barristers are incapable of sitting in Parliament, while all the majority have a capacity of being elected, of which they will be deprived by an Union.

But the opposers of the Union will say, the interests of the two islands are distinct, and sometimes contrary; should our Parliament be merged in that of Great Britain, the British Representatives will be always able to overbear by their numbers, the interests of Ireland."

What is this but urging the disease as a reason for not taking the remedy: the mischief now existing is, that the interests of the two countries *are* distinct and contrary; but by an Union, it is designed to consolidate and incorporate them. Suppose the Imperial Legislatures to be the same, the interests of Ireland returning one hundred Members,

Members, would be no more unequally supported against those of Great Britain, than those of Middlesex returning eight Members now, are against the interests of Cornwall which returns forty-four,—and for this reason, that the interests of the two countries would, by the Union, be as much identified as those of Cornwall and Middlesex.

The only diversity of interests which can remain, would be one for the advantage of Ireland; and it will be found in rating the proportion of taxes: such has been the advantage derived by Scotland from the Union, that while Ireland furnished a million yearly of taxes, Scotland has paid but £.700,000; because, by the treaty of Union, Scotland never can be charged at an higher rate than (I think) one fortieth of the taxation of England. The advantage to Ireland will be, that her proportion of taxes will be rated, at a time when England is
taxed

taxed perhaps at her highest, and Ireland is but very moderately burdened; so that taking it at the scale of the present day, Ireland never may be liable to pay, (however well her Representatives may be disposed to tax her), more than about one-twentieth of the annual taxation of the Empire.

National Pride opposes the Union—National Pride might be induced to support it, when it is recollected that since the Scotch Union, many of the first Ministers of the Empire have been taken from Scotland:—Stair, Argyle, Mansfield, Stormont, Dundas, have filled Seats in the Cabinet, and directed the concerns of the Empire,—and why?—because their talents, displayed in the Imperial Parliament, on Imperial subjects, have advanced them to situations, to which even greater talents in a local Legislature, could not have aspired; and is not this a theatre for national pride to emulate? is not

Irish

Irish genius equal to the task of Imperial Government?—the names of Burke, Sheridan, Barre, all answer the question; where would we have heard of them had they remained at home to wrangle in the little infantine squabbles of a local Legislature?—would Grattan have been known in the history of Europe, but for his *conversations* with Nelson and Hughes.

Of the numerous treatises written against an Union, I am pleased to see, that by far the greater proportion are avowed by Barristers, and that if we may believe report, very few of the remainder have been written out of the pale of the Four Courts: I am glad I say, because the public sentiment on their obvious interest, had anticipated the Lawyers' attack; it was easy to guess that when sixty-three, more than one-fifth of our House of Commons, were Barristers, that there must have been, (without counting *expectants*)

expectants) at least so many enemies to the removal of the Legislature to any distance from the Four Courts. But the intemperance with which some of these Gentlemen have written, was not to be expected from men of their information and rank in life; it is too much in the strain of that practice which has so much injured Ireland,—the practice of exciting popular outcry, and affixing popular odium upon those who dare to oppose the wishes or the interests of the Demagogue.—It is of the same complexion with that system which *ballooned* Castle-hack and Informer against every man who dared to oppose the progress of treason by argument, or to reveal its practices by evidence: yet in what state would this country have been, but for the vigorous sagacity of Duigenan, or the conscientious repentance of Reynolds.

I have

I have said, and I believe sincerely, that it is the wish of the enemies of the Orange-men, to urge them forward to an opposition of this measure of an Union; and I renew my entreaties, that my Brethren will balance the question fairly, and examine well their own motives, before they plunge into such conduct; for my part it would be sufficient for me to see the part taken by a Democrat to decide me to act in direct opposition; the chances that I would be right, would almost outweigh my own conviction to the contrary.

Observe what their conduct has been: Three several meetings have been held by the Roman Catholics, and not a single decision yet made, until they shall see the part we may take, and by throwing themselves into the opposite scale, overbear us by their numbers,—let us disappoint them.

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One of their body affecting to support an Union, has published a work filled with the grossest and most unqualified calumnies against the Orange institution :—Let us not be urged by this attack, to oppose even the Government which sustains and patronises the Author of that book. It took a lapse of one hundred and thirty years, before an Author could be found (the Roman Catholic Dr. Currie) to deny the Popish rebellion and massacres of 1641,—those of 1798 have been denied within four months after their existence by Dr. Mc Kenna. Five and twenty Popish Priests (by his own admission*) marching at the head of a Popish army, form no proof that that the Papists were concerned in the rebellion; we might admit what he has asserted, had a single Protestant Clergyman been found in the slightest degree connected with the horrors of last Summer.

Perhaps

Perhaps this is not the place or the time to discuss this question; I only speak of it, in order to give due estimation to Mr. McKenna's assertions with respect to Orangemen; it would require more time, more patience, perhaps more temper than present circumstances allow; it would require the agonizing recollection of the last six months to be recalled to view, it would require the volumes of evidence on the subject *suppressed by Authority*, and it would require a leisure and ability which are equally out of my reach and expectation.

On the subject of an Union, I have given my opinion. Obscure as I am, it is of little concern to me, what motives may be attributed, or what credit given to my arguments; they are a weight taken off my own mind, in being thus laid before the Public: if they are just as they are candid, I hope they may have

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their effect; if they are inconclusive and dangerous, I trust they will meet with the contempt they deserve.

AN ORANGEMAN.

December 22d, 1798.

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